

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

1. (Currently Amended) A grading apparatus for grading items of seafood with respect to their size, said apparatus comprising a plurality of juxtaposed endless conveyor belts, each belt including an unloading end and a loading end, adjacent belts forming a width therebetween,

wherein the width separating adjacent conveyor belts is larger at the unloading end than at the loading end of the belts, each conveyor belt having a cross-section with sloping sides such that in between each adjacent pair of belts is formed a sorting channel with substantially continuous sloping sides, each side being at an angle with respect to the axis of the belt in the range of about 70-85°, wherein each belt comprises a plurality of hinged segments forming said substantially continuous sloping sides, each of said hinged segments having an open cleft on a top of a ridge between the sloping sides of each segment.

2. (Original) The grading apparatus of claim 1, wherein each belt is a continuous elastic belt.

3. (Previously Presented) The grading apparatus of claim 1, wherein each of the continuously sloping sides has an angle in the range of about 70-80°.

4. (Previously Presented) The grading apparatus of claim 3, wherein each of the continuously sloping sides has an angle in the range of about 75-80°.

5. (Previously Presented) The grading apparatus of claim 3, wherein each of the continuously sloping sides has an angle of about 80°.

6. (Previously Presented) The grading apparatus of claim 1, wherein each cleft has a width in the range of about 3-10 mm.

7. (Previously Presented) The grading apparatus of claim 1, further comprising guiding means arranged by the loading end of the conveyor belts for guiding items of seafood to be graded to the channels in between adjacent belts and away from ridges and/or clefts on top of said hinged segments.

8. (Original) The use of an apparatus of any of claims 1-7 for the size grading of items.

9. (Previously Presented) The use of claim 8, wherein the items of seafood are selected from the group consisting of peeled or unpeeled shrimp tails, lobster tails, fish including capelin, sardine, herring, mackerel, horse mackerel, menhaden, anchovy, blue whiting, ocean perch, cod, pollock, haddock, oysters, clams and mussels.

10. (New) A grading apparatus for grading items of seafood with respect to their size, said apparatus comprising a plurality of juxtaposed endless conveyor belts, each belt including an unloading end and a loading end, adjacent belts forming a width therebetween,

wherein the width separating adjacent conveyor belts is larger at the unloading end than at the loading end of the belts, each conveyor belt having a substantially U-shaped cross-section with sloping sides such that in between each adjacent pair of belts is formed a sorting channel with substantially continuous sloping sides, wherein each

conveyor belt comprises a plurality of hinged segments having a substantially U-shaped cross-section with sloping sides forming said substantially continuous sloping sides and a bottom portion forming an angle in the range of about 70-85° with each sloping side, each of said hinged segments having an open cleft between the sloping sides of each segment.

11. (New) The grading apparatus of claim 10, wherein the open cleft is on a top of a ridge between the sloping side of each hinged segment.